GOP Confirms Weighing Alternate Convention Site

4-20-72

By Jesse W. Lewis Jr.
Washington Post Staff Writer

The Republican Party is seriously considering moving its 1972 convention to Miami Beach because of "major problems" in getting facilities ready in San Diego.

". . . We are presently proceeding with our plans to open the convention in San Diego Aug. 21. However, it is my obligation to attempt to prepare for any eventuality and to be aware of alternatives," said Richard L. Herman, vice chairman of the Republican convention arrangements committee, in a statement yesterday.

The consideration of Miami Beach as an alternative convention site surfaced yesterday from several sources — including Florida's Gov. Reubin Askew, Miami Beach Mayor Chuck F. Hall, Miami Beach City Manager Clifford W. O'Key and Republican National Committee officials in Washington.

So far the effort to decide whether it is San Diego or Miami has produced a quick trip to Chicago by Herman to nail down arrangements with San Diego Sports Arena owner Perer Graham, anger from San Diego businessmen and hope from Miami Beach officials.

Askew said he had "indirect contacts" with hte Republican Party on moving the convention to his state. Hall and O'Key were called from a regular city council meeting yesterday morning to the office of a Miami Beach public relations man, Hank Meyer, where they met an unnamed Republican Party envoy to discuss moving the convention to Miami Beach.

After the meeting O'Key said there have been "continuing unofficial inquiries for the pst two or three weeks. We're ready. We stand here wiht open arms. If they want to talk about coming here, let's talk.

"The next move is up to the Republicans," he said.

A top Republican Party official in Washington confirmed that moving the convention from San Diego to Miami Beach is being considered and added:

"I think the decision will have to be made this week."

A spokesman for San Diego's GOP Mayor Pete Wilson said: "It's mighty damned irritating to all of a sudden get calls that there are rumors here and rumors there that the convention is going to Miami Beach. The major is puzzled that if there were problems that were insurmountable that we were not contacted."

Convention arrangements committee vice chairman Herman said that "the critical problem' is making modifications in the San Diego Sports Arean in time for the Aug. 21 convention.

He said the work cannot be completed in time unless it "can begin sooner than the arena owner presently will permit."

"I hope that he can give us more time, and that he will not insist on permanent improvements that are prohibitive in cost," Herman said.

Another problem cited by Herman is that the San Diego Civic Host Committee "has been having some difficulty in meeting the commitments" on providing hotel rooms and money.

He said he expected 12,500 rooms to have been reserved "by this time with the prospect of increasing that to 14,000 or even 14,500". But he said that only 11,200 rooms are now available, "a number which would not permit us to accommodate all of the estimated 4,500 news media (employees) within the immediate area."

Leon Parma, chairman of the host committee, acknowledged that only 11,200 rooms are firm but that "several hundred" rooms have been informally committed. "We've got them and we'll have them," Parma said.

On the issue of money, Herman said his committee has received only $100,000 of a total of $600,000 pledged in cash by "the San Diego community." He said the schedule called for three payments of $200,000 on Aug. 1, 1971, Jan. 1, 1972 and April 1, 1972.